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ABSTRACT

A study conducted in England (Goebel, 1982) showed that older English adults preferred middle-aged and older persons over young persons in important relationships. Since research has shown Americans to have negative attitudes toward the elderly, it was hypothesized that older Americans might not share the English sample's preferences. To examine this issue, the English study was replicated in the United States with 66 adults ranging in age from 60 to 89. Eight subjects sorted photographs into age and attractiveness categories. The photograph age range used in England (early 20s to early 70s) was extended to include old-olds (early 20s to late 80s). The remaining 58 subjects rated photographs of young, middle-aged, young-old, and old-old persons, controlled for sex and attractiveness. The results showed that both American and English samples preferred middle-aged and young-old over young persons, but that the Americans preferred old-olds least of all ages. For both groups, preferences were more pronounced for instrumental than for expressive relationships. The cross-cultural similarities obtained suggest that the age bias demonstrated by Americans against the old-old may have been a function of the expanded research design as opposed to cross-cultural differences. In America, young-old subjects were compared with old-old subjects, and subjects perceiving themselves as younger were compared with subjects perceiving their age accurately. Rating differences were found between both chronological and perceived age groups. (NB)

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A RE-EXAMINATION OF AGE PREFERENCES IN RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT TO LIFE SATISFACTION: COMPARISONS OF AMERICAN AND ENGLISH OLDER ADULTS

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Running Head: Age Preferences of Older Adults

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Abstract

This study replicated an English investigation of older adults' age preferences in relationships important to quality of life. Eight older Americans sorted photographs into age and attractiveness categories. The photograph age range used in England (early 20s to early 70s) was extended to include old-olds (early 20s to late 80s). Fifty-eight additional participants rated photographs of young, middle-aged, young-old and old-old persons, controlled for sex and attractiveness. Both samples preferred middle-aged and young-old over young persons, but Americans preferred old-olds least of all ages. For both, preferences were more pronounced for instrumental than expressive relationships. Findings demonstrate methodology influences on stereotype study outcomes. In America, chronological and perceived age influences were also explored by comparing young-old (ages 60 to 74) with old-old participants (ages 75 to 89), and those perceiving themselves as younger with those perceiving themselves as their age. Rating differences occurred between both chronological and perceived age groups.

Key Words: age bias, age differences, age preferences, age stereotypes, perceived age

A RE-EXAMINATION OF AGE PREFERENCES IN RELATIONSHIPS IMPORTANT TO LIFE SATISFACTION: COMPARISONS OF AMERICAN AND ENGLISH OLDER ADULTS

Introduction

This investigation was a replication and expansion of an earlier study in England (Goebel, 1982), which showed that old English adults preferred middle-aged and older persons over young persons in important relationships. The English also seemed to differentiate among relationships on the basis of degree of mutual reciprocity involved and their age preferences were more pronounced for instrumental relationships in which they were likely to be dependent on the competency of the other person than for expressive relationships involving more reciprocal interpersonal exchanges.

These findings were interpreted as evidence that the older English adults did not hold the negative attitudes toward the aged so frequently noted in older Americans. It was speculated that older American adults might not share the English sample's preference for middle-aged and older persons in roles important to their life satisfaction. America is a youth oriented society and major reviews of the literature (Bennett & Eckman, 1973; McTavish, 1971), along with a survey of over 4,000 persons conducted for the National Council on Aging (Harris & Associates, 1975), have indicated that many people of all ages have negative attitudes toward the elderly.

Older Americans have been reported to share many of the negative attitudes toward the elderly held by younger age groups (West & Levy, 1981) and to have internalized society's negative stereotype into their self concepts (Peters, 1971). It is suggested that as a result, they suffer diminished self esteem, feelings of adequacy and usefulness (Remmerswaal, 1975), and these self perceptions are generalized resulting in a perception of other older persons as less adequate and useful than younger persons.

However, Kogan (1979) pointed out that the designs of earlier stereotype studies may have been responsible for generating evidence of a negative age bias by restricting measurement to attitudes held toward the aged instead of comparing attitudes held toward different age groups. Also, few investigations had provided specific referents although age preferences had been found to vary with type of referent (Bengtson, 1971). To avoid these shortcomings, the English investigation measured attitudes toward individuals representing three age groups (young, middle-aged, and old), including an age range from the early 20s to the early 70s, in a variety of specific relationships. Initially, the lack of evidence for age bias was assumed to reflect improved assessment of attitudes toward age and consequently to more accurately represent the feelings of older adults than had

many earlier findings.

Upon further reflection, the idea occurred that perhaps the age range of individuals presented as choices had been too restricted; that results might have been different if individuals older than the early seventies had been included As life expectancies have increased, concepts of 'old' have been changing. During recent years it has been suggested that within the old age phase, 'young-old' and 'old-old' life periods have become increasingly socially defined (Neugarten, 1977) and that subjects differentiate between the young-old (60 to 74) and old-old periods (75 and over) on the basis of characteristics and behavioral correlates (Chiriboga, 1978). Young-old persons are viewed as beyond being middle-aged but similar in that they are relatively healthy, active, and have opportunities for self fulfillment.

It seems old-old persons are more likely to be seen as fitting the cultural stereotype of 'old' which includes increased poor health, passivity, financial problems, incompetence, weakness, dependence, and rigidity, along with decreased productivity and employability (Green, 1981).

It was hypothesized that if the young-old and old-old do constitute distinguishable age groups with different characteristics and behavioral correlates then age preferences for relationships important to life satisfaction

may vary on the basis of these age groups. Therefore, the design of the American replication was expanded to examine preference choices across four age groups (young, middle-aged young-old, and old-old) representing an age range from the early 20s to the late 80s.

The replication was further expanded to investigate two additional questions concerning possible age preference differences in relation to the chronological and perceived ages of older American adults. The English participants, who ranged in age from 61 to 89, had been treated as one homogeneous age group; possible preference differences related to young-old and old-old status were not considered. In this study, the possibility that membership in these different chronological age groups might differentially influence age preferences was explored.

However, research on age identification suggests that perceived age is a better predictor of behavior than is chronological age. It has frequently been reported that older adults, even those over 70, tend to perceive themselves as younger than their chronological age (Kastenbaum et al, 1972; Streib, 1965) and that this is a defense mechanism to avoid self application of the negative stereotype assigned to old persons by society (Peters, 1971; Rogers, 1979). Perceiving themselves as younger is a way for older persons

to protect themselves from shifts into roles that involve a variety of losses (Guptill, 1969) and acceptance of a position of dependency and lower status offering few rewards to bolster feelings of self worth. In fact, the National Council on Aging survey (Harris & Associates, 1975) found that although respondents over 65 years of age tended to provide positive self appraisals, most saw themselves as exceptions to the rule. Moore (1975) found that they considered themselves to be 'ok' but saw others of about the same age as 'old fogies'. This study investigated the possibility that if perceived age is more psychologically meaningful than chronological age, older adults who identify with a younger age group might prefer younger persons over those from their own chronological age group.

In order to explore these questions, the American study investigated the interaction of chronological and perceived age with preferences of older adults across four age groups and in a variety of relationships important to their life satisfaction.

Method

Subjects

The sample included 66 Caucasian adults ranging in age from 60 to 89 (M = 73.39) with 25 males and 41 females. Participants were divided into two groups by chronological age: young-old, ages 60 to 74 (N = 35, 16 males, 19 females, mean age 67.69); and old-old, ages 75 to 89 (N = 31, 9 males, 22 females, mean age 79.84). They were drawn from a variety of sources (senior organizations, senior housing, civic groups) in a midwestern community of approximately 100,000 population. Participation was limited to noninstitutionalized individuals since institutionalization has been shown to negatively affect the elderly's attitudes toward aging and toward self (Pollack et al,1962). It was felt that institutionalized persons might base their preferences on feelings of loss of control and helplessness not typical of the older population generally. Socioeconomic status of the subjects reflected a relatively broad range but was predominantly middle class. The American sample was comparable to the sample in England, which consisted of 42 older adults from ages 61 to 89 (10 males, mean age 71.9; 32 females, mean age 71.2).

Procedure

Photographs of individuals representing four adult age groups were used to assess age preferences for relationships important to the life satisfaction of older adults. The procedure included a sorting task, a rating task, and a measure of perceived age.

Sorting Task

To select a set of photographs to be used in the rating task, eight older adults (two males and two females) from each age group), who did not participate in the rating task, sorted a series of 48 facial photographs of Caucasian adults (24 male, 24 female, ranging in age from the mid-20s to the late 80s), into four chronological age groups (young=under 40, middle-aged=40 through 59, young-old=60 through 74, and old-old=75 and over). They then sorted the photographs in each age group into three levels of attractiveness (attractive, neutral, unattractive). Sex and attractiveness were controlled because age is perceived differently for the sexes with females viewed as 'old' at earlier ages than males (Bell, 1976) and level of attractiveness influences how individuals are perceived (Goebel & Cashen, 1979). Photographs were selected to reduce expressive cues that might lead to personality inferences (Kogan, 1979). Color preference influence was eliminated by the use of black and

white photographs, facial expressions were neutral, and clothing was not evident.

The set of photographs used in the rating task contained a young, middle-aged, young-old, and old-old individual for each of four groups: attractive females, unattractive females, attractive males, unattractive males. The sixteen photographs selected were those which had received the highest placement consistencies for age and attractiveness within each sex by age category.

Rating Task

Flanagan (1978) identified a number of factors that adults of all ages view as important components of the quality of life. This study used ten of these factors which had been selected for the English study as being especially appropriate for the assessment of older persons' attitudes toward people of different ages. The findings in England indicated that the factors seemed to represent two types of relationships, instrumental and expressive, to which older adults tend to respond differently. Based on those findings, five of the factors were designated as involving expressive relationships (relations with relatives, relations with friends, having someone to do things for, active socializing passive socializing), and five factors as involving instrumental relationships (material well-being, physical

well-being, keeping informed, intellectual development, having useful work). Fifty-eight persons (14 young-old males, 17 young-old females, 7 old-old males, 20 old-old females) rated the set of sixteen photographs on each of the ten factors. They were asked to indicate how much they would prefer the photographed individual in a suggested relationship by placing each photograph in one of four stacks labeled "dislike a lot," "dislike a little," "like a little," and "like a lot." For example, preferences regarding the physical well-being relationship were determined by asking them to indicate how much they would like the person in the photograph to be their doctor. The presentation order of instrumental and expressive factors and of photographs was randomly varied. So that the older adults would rely only on the picture stimulus in making their choices, no comments regarding age, sex or attractiveness were made and since information input has been found to influence person perception (Connor et al, 1978), no information concerning the photographed individuals was given to the participants.

Perceived Age Measure

To ascertain perceived ages, a technique reported by Rogers (1979) was adapted for use with nonverbal stimuli. The eight same-sex photographs, placed in a random order, were presented to each person; males viewed the photographs

of males and females viewed the photographs of females. Each participant was asked, "Which of these is the same age you feel?" Based on the photograph chosen, participants were assigned to one of two perceived age groups. One group (N=33, 11 males, 22 females) included those who selected a photograph representing a stimulus age category younger than their chronological age group; the other group (N=25, 10 males, 15 females) included those who selected a photograph representing their own chronological age group.

The average chronological and perceived ages for the chronological age and sex groups are given below.

	Females		Males	
	Old-old (N=20)	Young-old (N=17)	Old-old (N=7)	Young-old (N=14)
CA M	80.1	68.2	80.6	67.2
PA M	72.5	56.9	67.9	55.5

This distribution reveals that although the average chronological ages for females and males were similar within age groups, the average perceived age for old-old females was substantially older than for males, and the increase from young-old to old-old was substantially greater for females than for males.

Results

To determine if older American adults 1) preferred middle-aged and older persons over younger persons in instrumental but not in expressive relationships and 2) if their chronological and perceived ages were related to their preferences, four separate repeated measures analyses of variance were performed on preference ratings of photographs of attractive females, unattractive females, attractive males and unattractive males. Chronological age and perceived age were used as between subject variables, and stimulus age (age group of the photographed individual) and relationship as within subject variables. Significant results ($p < .01$) for the analyses of ratings for females are given in Table 1, and for the ratings for males in Table 2

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Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

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Tables 1 and 2 show that there were no significant main effects for perceived age and only for attractive females did it have an interactive effect on ratings. The only significant chronological age main effect also occurred for attractive females, but chronological age was involved in interactive effects for all groups except attractive males. In contrast, significant main effects for and interactions

between stimulus age and relationship were obtained from each analysis. To directly compare the results of this study with those of the English study, one-way analyses of variance were calculated for the four age by relationship interactions. These results will be reported separately for each of the four sex by attractiveness groups. Significant results ($p < .01$) from the analyses of the interactions reported in Tables 1 and 2 will also be reported separately.

In order to determine if there were a relationship between sex of subject and age preferences, separate analyses of variance were computed for the four sex by attractiveness groups, with sex of subject and chronological age as between subject variables and stimulus age and relationship as within subject variables. These analyses were repeated with perceived age substituted for chronological age. The only significant statistic was a sex of subject by stimulus age effect for ratings of attractive females, $F(3,162)=8.86$, $p < .001$, $UI_s := .10$, showing that the old-old attractive female was rated higher by female subjects ($M=32.00$, $SD=4.55$) than by male subjects ($M=25.10$, $SD=5.87$). In considering these results, the relatively small sample of old-old men should be noted. The minimal evidence of sex differences seemed to justify combination of the data for analysis purposes.

Attractive Females

Breakdown of the CA x PA x SA x REL interaction reported in Table 1, resulted in a CA x PA x REL effect on ratings of the middle-aged attractive female, F (9, 486)=3.63, $p<.001$. The simple effects test was significant for 'physical well being', $F(1, 29)=9.97$, $p<.01$, showing that young-old subjects who perceived themselves as younger than they were, rated the middle-aged attractive female higher ($M=3.50$, $SD=.94$) than did young-old subjects who perceived themselves as young-old ($M=2.35$, $SD=1.06$). There was a trend ($p<.05$) in the same direction for young-old subjects on 'having useful work' and for old-olds on 'keeping informed'.

A significant CA x REL effect, F (9, 486)=3.74, $p<.001$, was obtained on ratings of the young-old attractive female. Simple effects tests showed old-old subjects rated the young-old attractive female significantly higher than did young-old subjects in three relationships: material well being, F (1, 56)=13.72, $p<.001$ (old-old $M=3.78$, $SD=.42$; young-old $M=3.23$, $SD=.92$); keeping informed, $F(1, 56)=24.69$, $p<.001$ (old-old $M=3.74$, $SD=.45$; young-old $M=2.90$, $SD=.75$); and having useful work, F (1,56)=7.24, $p<.01$ (old-old $M=3.26$, $SD=.66$; young-old $M=2.48$, $SD=.96$).

The means and standard deviations for significant simple effects tests ($p<.01$) on the stimulus age by relationship

interaction are given in Table 3.

Significant age preferences were obtained for all five instrumental relationships but for only two expressive relationships. Student-Newman-Keuls ($p<.01$) showed that both the young-old and middle-aged attractive females were preferred over the old-old and young for 'material well being', 'physical well being' and 'having useful work', and in addition, over the old-old for 'active socializing' and 'keeping informed'. The young-old attractive female was also preferred over the young and old-old for 'intellectual development' and over the middle-aged for 'material well being'. The young was preferred over the old-old on 'material well being', 'physical well being', and 'keeping informed'. However, for one of the expressive relationships, 'having someone to do things for (helping)', the old-old was preferred over the middle-aged, and was, in fact, the most preferred of all. Overall, the young-old attractive female was rated most favorably and the old-old least favorably.

Unattractive Females

This four-way analysis of variance yielded two significant interactions. Breakdown of the CA by REL effect revealed a significant chronological age difference in ratings for 'having useful work', $F(1,56)=9.25$, $p<.01$, with the four unattractive females being rated higher by old-old

adults (M=9.11, SD=1.70) than by young-old adults (M=7.61, SD=2.01). There was a trend ($p<.05$) in the same direction for 'material well being' and 'keeping informed'.

Analysis of the stimulus age by relationship effect revealed significant age preferences in the ratings of unattractive females for all relationships except 'helping'. The results of these analyses are given in Table 3.

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Age preferences were significant for four of the expressive relationships and for all of the instrumental relationships. Student-Newman-Keuls ($p<.01$) showed that the middle-aged unattractive female was preferred over the young, young-old, and old-old for all five of the instrumental relationships. For 'keeping informed' the young unattractive female was also preferred over the young-old and and old-old. For the expressive relationships, the young, middle-aged and young-old females were all preferred over the old-old for 'relative' and 'active socializing' and on the latter the middle-aged female was also preferred over the young-old. For 'friends' and 'passive socializing' the middle-aged unattractive female was preferred over the young and the old-old. The middle-aged female was preferred over the young

and old-old for all nine relationships and over the young-old for all but 'passive socializing'. Overall, the old-old unattractive female was rated lowest.

Attractive Males

The only significant interaction obtained from the four-way analysis of variance for the attractive males' ratings was a SA by REL effect. The significant results of the simple effects tests are given in Table 4.

Results were significant for all of the relationships. For 'relatives' and 'active socializing' the young and middle-aged were preferred over both the young-old and old-old, and the young-old was preferred over the old-old. For 'friends' the middle-aged attractive male was preferred over the other three, and both the young and young-old were preferred over the old-old. For 'helping', the middle-aged attractive male was preferred over the old-old. For passive socializing, the middle-aged and the young were preferred over the old-old, and the middle-aged was also preferred over the young-old. The instrumental relationships elicited even more consistent age preferences. For all these relationships, the young, middle-aged and young-old attractive males were preferred over the old-old, and for 'useful work' the middle-aged was also preferred over the young-old. Overall, the middle-aged attractive male was rated most favorably and the old-old attractive male least favorably.

Unattractive Males

Analysis of the CA by SA by REL effect obtained from this four-way analysis of variance yielded a CA by SA effect, for four of the expressive relationships: 'relatives', $F(3,168)=6.21$, $p<.001$; 'friends', $F(3,168)=5.74$, $p<.001$; 'helping', $F(3,168)=14.91$, $p<.001$; and 'passive socializing', $F(3,168)=6.92$, $p<.001$). For three of these, old-old subjects rated the unattractive young-old male higher than did the young-old subjects: 'relatives' $F(1,56)=12.16$, $p<.001$, (old-old $M=3.11$, $SD=.93$; young-old $M=2.23$, $SD=.99$); 'helping' $F(1,56)=21.10$, $p<.001$ (old-old $M=3.40$, $SD=.69$; young-old $M=2.38$, $SD=.96$); and 'passive socializing', $F(1,56)=8.14$, $p<.01$ (old-old $M=3.03$, $SD=.98$; young-old $M=2.29$, $SD=1.00$). For 'friends', $F(1,56)=7.13$, $p<.01$, young-old subjects rated the old-old unattractive male higher ($M=2.58$, $SD=1.09$) than did old-old subjects ($M=1.89$, $SD=.84$). There was a trend toward this on 'helping' and 'passive socializing' and for the ratings of the middle-aged unattractive male on 'helping'.

The results of the analyses for the stimulus age by relationship interaction are given in Table 4.

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Insert Table 4 about here

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The age preferences were significant for all of the relationships, but follow-up tests did not reach significance ($p < .01$) for the expressive relationship 'helping'. Student-Newman-Keuls ($p < .01$) indicated that the young-old unattractive male was preferred over the young unattractive male for 'relatives','friends', and 'active' and 'passive socializing'. For 'friends' both the middle-aged and old-old were preferred over the young, and the middle-aged also was preferred for 'active socializing.' For the five instrumental relationships, the middle-aged and young-old unattractive males were consistently preferred over the young, and for all but 'keeping informed' the old-old was also preferred over the young unattractive male. Overall, the young unattractive male was least preferred and the ratings of the young-old unattractive male were slightly higher than those of the others.

Summary

These older American adults expressed age preferences which varied for different relationships and as a function of the age, sex, and attractiveness of the individuals presented as choices. Generally, the middle-aged and young-old

photographed individuals were preferred over the young or old-old, and the old-old individuals were least preferred of all age groups. Age preferences were more pronounced and consistent for instrumental than for expressive relationships.

Age preferences differed in relation to chronological age of subjects for all sex by attractiveness groups except attractive males. For both attractive and unattractive females these differences occurred on instrumental relationships with old-old adults tending to give higher preference ratings than young-old subjects. For unattractive males, chronological age differences occurred on expressive relationships, and the age group giving higher ratings varied somewhat with the age of the photographed individual.

Only for attractive females did age preferences vary with the perceived age of the subjects. These differences occurred on instrumental relationships with participants who perceived themselves as younger than their chronological age tending to rate some females higher than participants who perceived themselves to be in their chronological age group.

Discussion

Comparison of the American results with those obtained in England, revealed striking similarities for the replication portion of the study but the expansion of age

preference choices to include both young-old and old-old individuals raised questions concerning earlier interpretation of the English findings. Both the Americans and English generally preferred young-old and middle-aged over young persons in relationships important to their life satisfaction. This was more pronounced for instrumental than expressive relationships suggesting that in both cultures concepts of instrumentality tend to be defined by age stereotypes but ideas about acceptability for affiliative relationships are based more on individual experience.

Taken alone, these findings might suggest that neither the older American nor English adults share the negative cutural stereotype of age, or the perception held by young adults that young persons are more instrumental than older persons (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969). However, this interpretation is nullified by the fact that the older Americans demonstrated age bias by rejecting old-old persons to an even greater degree than they did the young. Further evidence of age bias was provided by more consistent and pronounced rejection in instrumental relationships in which they were likely to be dependent upon the other person's competence than in expressive relationships in which competency was not so important. Competency is an age-related trait in our society and the stereotype of old

age includes incompetence as a characteristic. In contrast with young-olds, it seems old-olds were viewed as having exceeded some upper age limit beyond which people are no longer considered competent to fulfill instrumental roles in relationships. In general, the old-old individuals seem to have been perceived as least instrumental of all age groups. In view of the substantial cross-cultural similarities obtained in this study it seems probable that the age bias demonstrated by older Americans was a function of the expanded design as opposed to cross-cultural differences.

The results support the idea that the old-olds and young-olds are distinguishable from each other on the basis of characteristics (Neugarten, 1977) and that the young-olds are not viewed as ready for the implied deterioration of old age (Neugarten, 1974). The age difference between the young-olds and old-olds appeared to be more psychologically meaningful to the older Americans than the difference between the young-olds and middle-aged. Their preference for both middle-aged and young-old persons and rejection of old-old persons, confirms the idea that characteristics ascribed to the young-old seem to be more similar to those ascribed to the middle-aged than to the old-old (Schaie & Geiwitz, 1982).

But why would these older Americans view the young-olds as more similar to the middle-aged than to the old-olds when

the photographed individuals used to represent young-olds and old-olds were assessed by older Americans to be over age sixty? Since the passage of the Social Security Act in the 1930s, the onset of old age has typically been set at 65, and studies of social age norms show that today people are still perceived as being old by their mid-sixties (Harris, 1981).

A possible explanation may lie in the fact that older people have been found to put the onset of middle and old age at later points in time than do younger people (Rosow, 1974). The octogenarian, Bernard Baruch, is rumored to have defined an 'old' person as 'anyone who is 15 years older than I am.' Chronological age is a matter of fact but 'old' appears to be in the eye of the beholder. It may be that in spite of their chronological age, the young-olds were perceived as actually being middle-aged and not as 'similar to' the middle-aged. The over-sixty Americans may not have placed the onset of old age in the sixties but at some point after age 75, which included old-old but not young-old individuals. It can be further speculated that the 'over-sixty' English adults failed to demonstrate age bias because from their perspective the photographed persons used to represent old people were not perceived as 'old'.

Cross-cultural concensus concerning concepts of both age and attractiveness was demonstrated by the fact that the

stimulus photographs selected on the basis of consistency of ratings differed for the two samples in only one or two instances. Specific preference similarities in relation to sex, age, and attractiveness were also noted. Both Americans and English preferred the young-old attractive female, middle-aged unattractive female, middle-aged attractive male, and young-old unattractive male, and these preferences were more pronounced for instrumental relationships. This may have resulted from idiosyncratic characteristics of the particular stimulus photographs selected. However, the mean ratings of Americans suggest that they may have considered attractive males to be instrumental at younger ages than attractive females, but considered unattractive females instrumental at younger ages than unattractive males. In other words, they seemed to perceive decreased competency as a concomitant of aging in attractive males and unattractive females, and to a lesser degree, increased competency as a concomitant of aging in attractive females and unattracive males. Further research would be necessary to determine the attributions involved in these perceptions.

The hypothesized relationship between age preferences and subjects' chronological and perceived ages was not strongly evidenced but the findings which were significant revealed some interesting sex differences. Some of these may be

related to characteristics of the sample. The number of males and females in the young-olds was relatively balanced (14 males, 17 females) but the old-old sample was disproportionately female (7 males, 20 females). Although the chronological ages of males and females were comparable for both young-old and old-old participants, the old-old males' average perceived age was 4.6 years younger than the females' in contrast with a sex difference of only 1.4 years for the young-olds. This suggests the old-old females had incorporated into their self concepts the cultural tendency to assess women as being 'old' at earlier ages than men. This is further suggested by the fact that for men, the old-olds' average perceived age was 12.4 years older than the young-olds' compared with a difference of 14.6 years for the women. If identification of self as younger is associated with negative bias toward age, it appears the old-old males in this sample might have been more biased than the females. In fact, males have been found to be more biased against the old than are females, with very old males reported to be the most biased of all (West & Levy, 1981). Although the analyses for sex differences only reached significance in one instance, it seems possible that the sex distribution sometimes contributed to what appeared to be chronological age differences.

On some instrumental relationships, females were rated more favorably by old-old than by young-old adults and among ratings of attractive females, this was specially true for the young-old person. The tendency to perceive females as old at relatively early ages may have been modified in the old-old adults by the fact that generally, the older people are the later they think old age begins (Rosow, 1974). However, if compared with the males, females identified more strongly with the photographed women and therefore rated them more positively, the relatively large proportion of females in the old-old group might have contributed to the age difference. The results may also reflect sex differences in the value placed on older women. It has been noted that of men and women in different age categories, older women represent the lowest prestige group in society (Bell, 1976). In this study, the only significant difference related to the participants' sex showed the old-old attractive female was rated higher by females than by males.

The young-old unattractive male was sometimes rated higher by old-old than by young-old adults, but the old-old unattractive male was sometimes rated higher by young-old than by old-old subjects. Comparison of the mean ratings suggests that this discrepancy was brought about by the old-old adults' inflated ratings of the young-old

unattractive male and deflated ratings of the old-old unattractive male; that the young-old adults did not really differ in their ratings of these two unattractive males. The strong tendency of the old-old males to identify with younger age groups seems to have been magnified when the identification involved unattractive males. Since it becomes increasingly difficult for older people to camouflage and deny changes in their own physical appearance, perhaps for old-old females, acceptance of an old, ugly man from their own age group in personally interactive relationships also raised specially painful issues of self identification as an old, ugly female.

For females, preference differences related to the participants' chronological ages occurred more frequently for instrumental relationships but for unattractive males differences were more frequent for expressive relationships. This contrast may relate to the identification of the personality component of instrumentality with the male sex role (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) and expressiveness with the female role. Since most differences showed higher ratings from old-olds than young-olds for young-old females in instrumental roles and young-old males in expressive roles, the findings suggest that the young-olds were perceived in a counter sex-role-stereotyped manner by the old-old adults.

This may reflect the reported tendency for females to become more oriented toward instrumentality as they grow older, but for males to become more oriented toward expressiveness (Gutmann, 1977), and to view other people from this perspective.

The difference related to participants' perceived age on preference ratings of attractive females showed that for some instrumental relationships, those who perceived themselves as younger than their chronological age group rated the middle-aged attractive female higher than those who perceived themselves as being in their chronological age group. An explanation for the middle-aged female's being specially affected may be that both male and female young-olds and old-old males who perceived themselves as younger tended to perceive themselves as middle-aged and this may have resulted in identification with the middle-aged attractive female. It is probable that this difference did not occur for the attractive middle-aged male due to the fact that the older adults in general had such firm convictions concerning his desirability in instrumental roles. Special identification with the attractive middle-aged female may have been further enhanced by the two to one ratio of females to males in the group perceiving themselves as younger.

Differences in expectancies for attractive males and

females with regard to their instrumentality, are further pointed out by the fact that differences related to participants' chronological age were obtained on preference ratings of all sex by attractiveness groups except attractive males, and differences related to participants' perceived age were only obtained for attractive females. Ratings of attractive males were more consistent than those for other sex by attractiveness groups, suggesting the older adults in this study shared a firm, common set of expectancies for attractive males which included competent fulfillment of instrumental roles. This is not surprising since instrumentality is positively identified with the male stereotype. In contrast to the concensus concerning attractive males, the ratings of attractive females for instrumental relationships were the most susceptible to the influence of participants' sex, and chronological and perceived ages, suggesting that these older Americans held less culturally defined expectancies for attractive women with regard to roles involving competency.

In summary, the results firmly support the idea that Americans quickly observe the age and sex of an individual and draw conclusions about their behavior (Neugarten et al, 1965), and that the attractiveness of the individual affects these conclusions. In addition, the chronological and

perceived ages of the person making the observations, and perhaps their sex as well, appear to affect preferences for individuals in relationships important to life satisfaction. The impact of these characteristics on instrumental relationships is greater than on expressive. It appears that older American adults share the negative cultural stereotype of old age but may set the beginning of old age at closer to age 75 than 65. The American findings raise serious questions concerning the interpretation of the results of the study done in England and confirm the influence of designs on outcomes of stereotype studies.

Table 1

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS FOR REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR RATINGS OF FEMALES

Source[a]	SS	df	MS	F	UI_s:
Attractive Females					
CA	33.02	1	33.02	7.80*	.11
SA	89.21	3	29.73	14.15	.15
REL	190.89	9	21.21	35.41	.36
CA x REL	21.58	9	2.39	4.00	.05
SA x REL	90.87	27	3.36	11.07	.15
CA x PA x SA x REL	14.35	27	.53	1.75*	.01
Unattractive Females					
SA	191.31	3	63.77	26.85	.26
REL	339.66	9	37.73	59.13	.49
CA x REL	21.13	9	2.34	3.68	.04
SA x REL	69.71	27	2.58	6.51	.09

*.01 level of significance; all others .001 level

[a]CA=subjects' chronological age; PA=subjects' perceived age; SA=stimulus age (age of photographed individual); REL=relationship

Table 2

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS FOR REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSES OF VARIANCE FOR RATINGS OF MALES

Source[a]	SS	df	MS	F	UI_s:
Attractive Males					
SA	215.33	3	71.78	34.54	.31
REL	19.90	9	2.21	3.80	.04
SA x REL	39.68	27	1.46	4.43	.06
Unattractive Males					
SA	104.80	3	34.94	12.78	.14
REL	91.69	9	10.19	12.46	.16
CA x SA	56.04	3	18.68	6.84	.07
SA x REL	20.93	27	.78	2.14	.02
CA x SS x REL	16.96	27	.62	1.74*	.01

*.01 level of significance; all others .001 level

[a]CA=subjects' chronological age; PA=subjects' perceived age; SA=stimulus age (age of photographed individual); REL=relationship

Table 3

MEAN RATINGS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF FEMALES ON RELATIONSHIPS FOR WHICH AGE PREFERENCES WERE SIGNIFICANT

Relationship	Group[a]	Young	Middle Age	Young-Old	Old-Old
		M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD[b]
Instrumental					
Material	AF	2.67/0.87	3.12/0.86	3.47/0.68	2.29/0.92
Well Being	UF	1.91/0.82	2.62/0.88	1.78/0.73	1.59/0.75
Physical	AF	2.43/0.98	3.12/1.03	3.07/0.93	2.07/0.93
Well Being	UF	1.76/0.78	2.62/1.01	1.75/0.83	1.48/0.60
Keeping	AF	3.02/0.95	3.29/0.82	3.29/0.75	2.14/0.96
Informed	UF	2.50/0.92	2.98/0.98	1.81/0.76	1.62/0.77
Intellectual	AF	3.17/0.82	3.40/0.82	3.67/0.57	3.13/1.03
Development	UF	2.34/0.89	2.98/0.78	2.48/1.05	2.26/1.02
Useful Work	AF	2.84/0.91	3.29/0.82	3.48/0.78	2.53/1.00
	UF	1.90/0.81	2.81/0.95	1.98/0.76	1.62/0.75

Table 3 (continued)

Expressive					
Relatives	AF				
	UF	2.72/0.95	3.10/0.77	2.76/1.00	2.29/0.99
Friends	AF				
	UF	2.50/0.92	2.98/0.89	2.66/0.91	2.47/1.06
Helping	AF	3.53/0.68	3.43/0.77	3.71/0.68	3.81/0.51
Someone	UF				
Active	AF	3.36/0.79	3.55/0.63	3.59/0.68	3.12/0.97
Socializing	UF	2.71/0.97	3.09/0.84	2.52/0.94	2.05/0.93
Passive	AF				
Socializing	UF	2.67/0.87	3.22/0.75	2.97/1.03	2.59/0.99

[a] AF=attractive females, UF=unattractive females

[b] *M*/*SD*=mean/standard deviation

Table 4

MEAN RATINGS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS OF MALES ON

RELATIONSHIPS FOR WHICH AGE PREFERENCES WERE SIGNIFICANT

Relationship	Group[a]	Young	Middle Age	Young-old	Old-old
		M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD[b]
Instrumental					
Material	AM	3.36/0.74	3.76/0.51	3.47/0.88	2.64/1.10
Well Being	UM	1.53/0.65	2.12/0.88	2.16/0.99	2.36/1.02
Physical	AM	3.53/0.68	3.71/0.62	3.47/0.75	2.83/0.98
Well Being	UM	1.57/0.73	2.21/0.99	2.07/0.79	2.14/1.02
Keeping	AM	3.76/0.43	3.72/0.52	3.47/0.78	2.50/0.96
Informed	UM	1.97/0.82	2.48/0.92	2.45/1.03	2.24/0.94
Intellectual	AM	3.66/0.55	3.69/0.63	3.41/0.80	2.84/1.11
Development	UM	1.78/0.80	2.38/0.95	2.64/1.13	2.41/1.04
Useful Work	AM	3.53/0.63	3.83/0.38	3.41/0.90	2.53/1.08
	UM	1.59/0.77	2.22/0.96	2.36/1.00	2.17/0.99

Table 4 (continued)

Expressive					
Relatives	AM	3.64/0.48	3.69/0.57	3.29/0.84	2.93/1.02
	UM	1.98/0.95	2.24/0.88	2.63/1.05	2.36/1.04
Friends	AM	3.33/0.76	3.69/0.50	3.29/0.75	2.67/0.96
	UM	1.86/0.89	2.26/0.87	2.53/0.86	2.26/1.04
Helping	AM	3.40/0.77	3.55/0.65	3.00/0.84	2.45/0.96
Someone	UM	2.47/0.98	2.55/0.92	2.86/0.98	3.85/0.95
Active	AM	3.41/0.68	3.47/0.65	3.00/0.84	2.45/0.96
Socializing	UM	1.79/0.79	2.22/0.88	2.22/0.97	2.09/0.88
Passive	AM	3.47/0.68	3.60/0.62	3.24/0.78	3.09/0.90
Socializing	UM	2.05/0.93	2.43/0.98	2.64/1.05	2.48/1.16

[a] AM=attractive males, UM=unattractive males

[b] M/SD=mean/standard deviation

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Footnotes

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